

Story #132 (Tape #14, 1961-62)

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informant was from Diyarbakır

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The Hen That Laid the Golden Eggs

Once there was and twice there was not a family, and this family never had any good luck in this life. They were very poor, and the father of the family seldom found any work. So, one day the woman asked her husband to go out into the world and seek his fortune, and this he did. He traveled and he traveled until he happened upon a dervish. After exchanging greetings with the dervish, the man was asked by the dervish what it was that he sought on his travels.

"I am seeking my fortune, whatever that might be," answered the man.

"You have set your feet in the right path," said the dervish. "Continue along this way, and you will find that over there beyond that hill there is a swamp, and it is there that you will discover what your fortune is to be."

The man walked and walked until he came to the hill, and then he went around the hill to the swamp that lay beyond. There in the swamp he saw some reeds growing, some quite short and others very long, and all of these reeds were the (kismets) of different people. The taller ones were the good-luck lives of the rich and successful; the middle-height reeds were the lives of ordinary, comfortable people; and the very short reeds were the ill-fortuned lives of the poor and destitute. The man looked long at these reeds in the shallow water, but he was unable to pick out the reed that represented his fortune. Finally he called out, "My fate! My kismet! Where are you? Tell me."

After he had done this several times, he at last heard a voice reply, "I am here--over here." And the voice that spoke sighed afterwards.

The man walked over to the spot from which the voice had come, and there he found a spindly reed lying flat in the mud. He straightened up the reed and then he said, "Ah, my fortune--speak to me again and tell me what the future holds. We are very poor people and I should like to know what is yet to come.

The reed stood silent for a moment, and then it began to speak: "Go a little farther around this hill and there you will find a road along which ~~caravans~~ pass almost every day. When a caravan comes along, tell them that that road is yours and that you must collect a toll from them. The first caravan will offer you silver and then gold, but do not accept either as your toll. Tell them that you want only the hen carried by the old man at the very end of the caravan."

After straightening up his reed again and thanking it, the man proceeded along the way further around the hill, and there on the other side he did indeed find a caravan road. He sat down and waited for a long time, and he wondered if a caravan would ever come along that way. Finally, when he was almost ready to leave, a long caravan came in sight, and when it came to where he was sitting, the man stopped it. He told the caravan leader that they were traveling along his road and that they would have to pay him a toll.

"All right, then. What do you want?" replied the caravan leader. Then the leader offered him a bag of silver. This he refused. The leader then offered him a bag of gold, and this too he refused. "Well, what is it that you want?"

"Let me look through your caravan and I shall tell you," said the man. He walked the full length of the line of horses and camels, pretending to look at the loads they carried. When he came to the end of the caravan, there was the old man about whom the dervish had told him. He was sitting in a carriage, and in his lap he was holding a hen. "That is what I want as my toll," he said,

pointing at the hen.

The old man said, "With all the silver and gold and other valuable things carried in this long caravan, why is it that you want only my hen?" But the kismet seeker would have nothing else for his toll, and finally the caravan leader forced the old man to give him his hen. Putting the hen under his arm the kismet seeker went home with it

After walking a long while, he at last reached home again. He at once told his wife the whole story of his adventures and the fate that was his. She listened to him until he was finished, and then she exclaimed, "Oh, you fool. Why did you take just an old hen when you could have had so much silver and gold instead?"

The man said, "But this is my fortune. We must take what my fortune has sent."

They put the hen into a chicken coop, and when they went to it the next morning they found a golden egg had been laid by the hen. Picking it up, they took it to a jeweler, and there they exchanged it for money. From that time on, the hen laid a golden egg every day. And this went on for some time, until the man had so much gold that he became very rich, and finally he decided to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. He left his wife and home and children, and he started on his way.

The woman was left much by herself, and she was very lonely. One day she said to her sons, "Go out into the street and see whoever is there, and bring them in to talk with us." The boys went out, but they could find no one except a stranger. "All right," she said. "Bring him in."

They became friends, and after talking for a while, the woman told the stranger about their wonderful hen. "It is strange that you should mention a

hen," said the visitor, "for I have been very hungry for chicken. It would please me very much if we could have that hen for dinner tonight

"Oh, no," said the woman. "I could not serve you that hen, for it is my husband's fortune

But after much talking, the stranger persuaded her to change her mind, and she called the servant and told her to kill the hen and serve it for their dinner

Now, the servant knew all about the hen, and she had been listening to the conversation all the time through the crack in the door. When she was told to kill the hen, she set the head and the neck aside, and she made a separate dish with the rest of the chicken. Since, according to the saying about the hen, whoever ate the head of the hen would become a padişah and whoever ate the neck would become a vizier, the servant fed the head of the hen to the older boy and the neck of the hen to the younger boy. Then she helped them out of the window, saying, "Run away, quickly!"

When the chicken was served at the table, the stranger said, "Why, where are the head and the neck of the chicken?"

"I do not know anything about it," said the woman, "but I shall call the servant and ask her." When she asked the servant, the servant said that the head and the neck had been cooked inside the chicken. Quickly the stranger cut the chicken open, but he could not find the head and the neck inside. He was angry when he saw this, and the servant was called back. Finally she admitted that she had given the head of the hen to the older boy and the neck of the hen to the younger boy, and that she had sent them out the window. And how she was punished!

But the boys had gone out through the window safely, and they walked and walked, until finally they came to a fork in the road. They decided to take

different roads because their fortunes were taking them apart, so the younger one took the road to the right and the older one took the road to the left

The older one went on and on, until at last he came to a big city. In this city the king had died, and the people were choosing a new king. They chose a king in this way: they released the former king's dove, and when the bird perched on someone's head, that person would become the new king. When the king's dove was released, he flew directly to the head of the older son and perched on his head. But when they saw the bird perched on the head of a stranger, the people did not like it. They wanted to try the test again. For a second time, they set the bird free and it went and perched on the head of the same boy. Still the people were not satisfied, and the bird was released for the third time. And the third time the dove went and perched on the head of the same boy. There was nothing else to be done, so they accepted him as the king. Thus the elder boy found his fortune.

The younger boy walked and walked on his own road, and at last he came to another city. That city was all in black, mourning for a dead king. He went and knocked at the door of one of the houses and asked the woman whether he could spend the night in that house. The woman accepted him, saying that a stranger was God's guest

the one who ate the neck of the hen would not only become a vizier, but he would also find a cup of gold under his bed every day. The next morning, therefore, when the old woman came to call the boy, she saw that there was a cup of gold under his bed. She understood that there was something extraordinary about this boy. Quietly she took the gold, and then she woke him up. "Please," she asked, "will you stay and be my son? I like you as if you were my own son." And the boy stayed on in that house. From that day on, the woman would wake up earlier than the boy, and would pick up the cup of gold from under his bed.

And she became richer and richer.

But one day when the boy woke up earlier than usual, he found a cup of gold under his bed, and he was very much surprised. The next morning he again found a cup of gold, and the next morning, and the next morning. But he did not say anything about this to the woman, and the woman had gotten so rich that she did not need any more.

In the city where this younger son was, there lived the most beautiful girl in the world. She was so beautiful that the kings of other lands would come

a year to see her. To see this beautiful girl, everyone had to pay a cup of gold, and this is how the younger boy began spending his money. Every day he would give his cup of gold to see the girl, because he had fallen in love with her.

When she saw the same boy come to her every day over and over again, she was curious to know how he was able to come so often. Finally she found out his secret, and one night when he was visiting her, she gave him something to eat that made him quite ill. In his illness he vomited up the neck of the chicken, which had lain all this while undigested in his stomach. When the girl had the neck of the chicken, she threw the boy out into the bushes, and she quickly swallowed the neck of the hen herself.

When the boy woke up in the morning, he found himself all by himself in the bushes. When he looked around to find the cup of gold, there was nothing to be seen. He felt very downhearted, knowing that he had lost his fortune. Now he would never be able to become a vizier, and he had not a penny to his name.

While he was thinking what to do, he saw three men quarreling, and he asked

they were quarreling about. One of the men said, "We have a stick and a carpet and a cloak. The stick will beat anyone when it is given the order,

'Beat, my stick. Beat!' Whoever wears the cloak is invisible. And whoever steps on the rug can go anywhere he wants."

The boy said, "I shall settle your quarrel. I shall make an arrow and shoot it. Whoever gets it first will get all three of these things, because all three of these things can be used together." He shot the arrow as far as he could, and when all three of them started running fast in order to get it, he caught hold of the cloak and the carpet and the stick and he ran away in the other direction. He put on the cloak, picked up the stick, stepped on the carpet, and said, "Take me to the roof of the beautiful girl's house."

Almost at once he found himself on the girl's roof. Then he ordered his stick, "Beat, my stick. Beat!" and the stick began beating on the top of the roof. The girl gave orders to her servants to go up and see what was happening on the roof. Since the boy was invisible, the servants who went up on the roof could not see anything there. They came down, saying, "there is nothing there. It is nothing." But the beating went on

Then the girl herself went up on the roof. When the boy saw her looking puzzled about the beating, she looked so funny that he began to laugh. When he laughed, he became visible, and the girl took him in again. After a while she gave him a sleepy drink, and then more and more. When he had had so much that he fell asleep, she took the stick and the cloak and the carpet, and this time she had the boy thrown into a well.

When the boy woke up at the bottom of the well, he knew that he had been tricked again by the girl, and he had no way to get out except a small passage at the side of the well. He walked and walked along the passage until he came to a strange new world. There were many trees there, and they were all green. But outside, it was winter.

He walked and walked in the woodland until he saw some white grapes. He ate them, and suddenly he became a horse. He ran and ran and ran and ran, and finally he came to some red grapes. He ate some, and this time he became a deer. After becoming a deer he could not run around, because of the big horns on his head. And he was disgusted with this. Then he saw some black grapes. "Let me eat some of those," he said. "Let me be anything but a deer, because I cannot move with these antlers on my head." He ate a black grape, and immediately he became a man again.

Then he had a nice idea. He picked some of all three kinds of grapes and he walked back through the tunnel and finally managed to climb out into his own world again. He put his grapes in a basket and he started going through the streets. "I sell grapes!" he called. "I sell grapes!" At last he came to the girl's house

When the girl heard the grapeman calling--and all in the middle of winter, too--she told her servant to buy some grapes for her. And the servant came to buy some grapes. The boy gave the servant some red grapes, and when the girl and her servants ate the red grapes their antlers grew so much that they stuck out of the window and they could not pull their heads in. While they were standing there helpless, he went upstairs and gave them each a white grape. When they ate the white grapes they became horses, and he decided to use these horses as beasts to carry burdens

At this time, a king in another city was having a palace built for himself, so the boy took the horses--forty of them, besides the one which was the beautiful girl--to help in the construction of the palace, and had them work like slaves. So he took his revenge on them.

When the construction was finished, he went to get his money. And it seems that everyone who came to get his money was to tell the king a story. When it



was his turn, the boy told his own story. When the king heard this story, he understood that the boy was his own brother. He hugged him, telling him that they were brothers. And then the king told his own story, saying also that he was still unmarried

The younger brother said, "I know the most beautiful girl in all the world. You should marry her." So the younger boy gave the horse who was the beautiful girl a black grape, and immediately she became a beautiful girl again. He had the forty other horses eat black grapes and they became servants again, and he put them under his own service.

The king made his brother his vizier, and so all their fortune was fulfilled. And they lived happily ever after.